

# Allegheny County's Approach to Population Control: The Population Control Manager

by Charles Kozakiewicz,  
Warden, Allegheny County  
Jail, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania

**T**he Allegheny County Jail, built in 1887, has a history of problems related to crowding and other conditions of confinement. As a result of a class action suit brought by inmates in 1976, the jail is still subject to a federal court order.

Although crowding was not specifically addressed in that initial suit, the issue was subsequently before the court in 1983. At that time, the court

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determined that the jail was inadequate and could not meet the requirements for a modern jail facility or the needs of the county's criminal justice system over the next decade.

## Court-Ordered Remedies

The court in 1983 imposed jail population caps and subsequently appointed a court monitor. The court also ordered:

- that the jail be closed;
- that immediate space be provided for 100 inmates in an alternate facility;
- that a new facility be constructed by 1993; and
- that the warden release all weekend and work-release prisoners and the lowest-bond pre-trial inmates in order to meet the court-ordered population cap.

To provide immediate, if temporary, relief, two alternate jail facilities were opened in the county. One was created through new construction and renovation of a thirteen-story office building to house 435 inmates; the other was a temporary city holding facility renovated to house up to 117 county inmates. In addition, two work release centers were opened for males and one for females.

## Local Criminal Justice Committee

During the same period, a committee was formed at the direction of the Allegheny County Prison Board. It was comprised of representatives of all the local criminal justice components—magistrates, court staff, judges, the district attorney, bail agency personnel, and staff of the

probation, parole, and all related agencies.

The committee was charged to expedite the flow of inmates through the system, to direct from the jail those who did not need to be incarcerated, and to locate space in other facilities. Its efforts also included making contractual arrangements with adjacent counties to secure all available jail space.

## The Need for a Jail Population Control Officer

These activities, taking place on a consistent daily basis, began to monopolize the time of jail administration personnel. An additional problem was that not even a perfect computer system can be effective in controlling the jail population unless an administrator, with sufficient support staff, is empowered to identify the individual prisoners that can be moved.

The solution was to direct these activities to one individual. Allegheny County decided to hire a population control manager who was given the specific responsibility to coordinate efforts for the release or transfer of inmates and the power to identify eligible inmates, consistent with state law.

Categories of inmates eligible for release, transfer, or expedited movement through the jail include:

- **Inmates held for violating county probation:** The population control manager works with the county probation office, the court of common pleas, and the district attorney's office to expedite probation violation proceedings.
- **Inmates held for violating state parole:** Where appropriate, the population control manager, in cooperation with the district attorney's office, requests a reduction of bond on any new charge so that inmates can be transferred to a state correctional facility for action by the parole board.
- **Inmates convicted and not yet sentenced:** The population control manager works to expedite the speedy sentencing of convicted inmates who are not yet sentenced. First priority is given to inmates who have been convicted of crimes that will require commitment to the state under Pennsylvania's sentencing guidelines.
- **Inmates awaiting trial:** This category is comprised of individuals being held only in default of the bail set by the court of common pleas or a district justice. Although the court, the district attorney's office, and the bail agency are responsible for ongoing review of this category, the population control manager also assists in this effort.
- **Inmates awaiting transfer to state correctional institutions:** The population control manager

arranges for the transfer of prisoners being held in the Allegheny County Jail who are awaiting acceptance by state correctional facilities. Furthermore, when inmates have served their minimum sentence, the population control manager assists in the parole process.

- **Inmates held for other authorities:** The population control manager expedites the transfer of prisoners being held for other authorities. Prisoners of state facilities scheduled for a hearing in the court of common pleas are housed in the State Correctional Institution at Pittsburgh while attending such hearings.

The primary goal of the population control manager is to coordinate the intake and transfer of Allegheny County Jail inmates. In the interests of efficiency and economy, the population control manager enjoys the full cooperation of the jail administration and a variety of agencies, officials, and contractors. Their efforts are directed at keeping the flow of inmates continually moving within the county jail system and ensuring that all possible measures are being taken to keep the inmate population at a minimum and below the court-established cap.

**A**ppointing a population control manager has brought significant benefits to the Allegheny County Jail administration. The position is recognized by the court and criminal justice agencies as a vital component

in the entire criminal justice system of Allegheny County.

### **A Footnote: Allegheny County's Catch-22**

Allegheny County is currently in a difficult, "no-win" situation in spite of the population control manager's success in reducing the jail population.

In its order, the court set a jail population cap of 580 inmates and stipulated that the county would be fined \$25,000 for every month in which the cap was exceeded. On the other hand, however, the court also imposed a fine of \$5,000 for "every prisoner released to meet the court-ordered population cap. . ."

Although the amount of this fine was reduced in 1989 from \$5,000 to \$100, the result is the same: the jail cap cannot be exceeded, but the county is penalized when it releases inmates in order to comply with the cap. Between November 16, 1983, and December 30, 1990, 11,319 inmates have had to be released under these circumstances.

Relief for this situation is fortunately on the horizon: Allegheny County will break ground in the fall of 1991 for a new jail to be occupied by 1993.

For further information, contact Warden Charles Kozakiewicz, Allegheny County Jail, 440 Ross Street, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania; (412) 255-0100. ■